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Rev. Wm. Alexander
with regards of J. G. P. Jr.

# MEMOIRS

OF

# DECEASED ALUMNI

OF

# St. John's College, Annapolis,

READ ON COMMENCEMENT DAY, JULY 31st, 1872,

BY

J. G. PROUD, Jr., A. M.,
CHRONICLER.

Printed by request of the Association of Alumni.

ANNAPOLIS:
1872.

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# NECROLOGY.

THOMAS STOCKETT ALEXANDER, L L. D.

JAMES EDGAR RICHARDSON, A. M.

Advertiser Print.
Annapolis, Md.

# MEMOIR
OF
# THQMAS S. ALEXANDER, L L. D.

At our annual Festival four years ago we placed upon the roll of our deceased Alumni the name of John Henry Alexander—and now it becomes our duty to record the death of his not less distinguished brother Thomas S. Alexander.

For the materials of the present notice we are principally indebted to a relative of his, a member of the Baltimore Bar.

Thomas Stockett Alexander, the eldest son of William and Mary Alexander, was born in Annapolis on the 23rd of December, 1801. He was educated at Saint John's College, though he does not seem to have taken the usual academic degree. This is probably owing to the fact that it was during the long period of depression in the history of the College when no degrees were conferred; an era, however, which was distinguished by the names of some of the most eminent of her sons, whose education was completed within her walls—among them those of Reverdy and John Johnson, Judge Nicholas Brewer, Philip Barton Key, and others well known in the annals of the State. But he is said to have been a close and methodical student, forming in College those habits of systematic application which characterized him all through his professional career.

Upon leaving College he seems to have sought a clerkship, as affording immediate pecuniary return; an object which the then straitened circumstances of his family made desirable. By the influence of a friend he was, however, persuaded to begin the study of law, which he did under the direction of the late Col. James Boyle, afterwards Deputy Attorney General of the State for Anne Arundel County, supporting himself, in the meantime, in various clerical capacities in the Legislature and different public offices in Annapolis.

He was admitted to the Bar on the 21st of April, 1821, before he had attained his majority. It is said that he was much discouraged by his earliest efforts, though considered by others as evincing great promise. Favorable circumstances induced him to apply himself specially to the study of the principles and practice of Equity, and his ambition seems to have been to become a thorough Chancery lawyer. His talent and assiduity were rewarded with early success. His business habits, quickness of apprehension and clear comprehension of the principles of law, soon gained him the high esteem of many friends; and upon a vacancy occurring in the office of Auditor of the Court of Chancery, their influence procured him the appointment. From that time his future was assured, and his business in his favorite Court, as also in the County Courts and Court of Appeals, rapidly increased.

In 1839 he published his "Maryland Chancery Practice," a work of such singular accuracy that the Judges of the State constantly cite it as authority. From this time until the abolition of the Court of Chancery in 1851, he was employed, on one side or the other, in every important case in that Court.

On the death of Chancellor Bland, about the year 1846, he was offered the Chancellorship by Governor Pratt, but declined the appointment. In 1844 he had increased the sphere of his business by removal to Baltimore, where he continued to reside until the close of 1866, when he removed to Newark, New Jersey, pursuing his profession mainly in New York, but still retaining a portion of his Maryland practice,—many of his old clients being unwilling to give up his professional services. He thus continued in active labours, in the full possession of all his powers, until the commencement of the brief illness which terminated in his death at Newark, December 4th, 1871, having nearly completed the seventieth year of his age.

The absorbing object of Mr. Alexander's life seemed to be the science of law, and his chief aim to make himself a

learned and accomplished lawyer. He manifested very little ambition for political distinction. And yet he could not altogether disregard the public claims which talents and prominence such as his imposed. He consented to serve the State in the Legislature for several terms, representing his native City of Annapolis as a member of the House of Delegates during the sessions of 1836 and 1837. In the latter term he was offered the Speakership, which he declined, preferring the more useful position of a working member. He was the author of the legislative amendment to the Constitution made at that period, under which the Governor was elected by the people. He also prepared the assessment bill of 1840, at the request of Robert W. Bowie, who was Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means of that year.

In 1861, he served as one of the Representatives of the City of Baltimore. On each occasion, it is needless to say, he was one of the leading and most influential members of the House. Subsequently his name was presented by many appreciative friends as a candidate for the United States Senate. Perhaps his expressed views, too moderate and conciliatory to suit the temper of the times, were one of the chief obstacles to his selection. The arts of the politician were uncongenial alike to his habits and tastes, and he would have instinctively shrunk from the conflicts of an arena where intrigue and management are unhappily too often the necessary conditions of success.

Of every public enterprise of benevolence and utility he was an earnest and intelligent supporter, especially of the cause of Education. His efforts largely contributed to establish, against vigorous opposition, the first Primary School in the City of Annapolis, and he was long an efficient trustee of the Public Schools of the county. He was also for several years a member, and for much of the time Secretary, of the Board of Visitors and Governors of the College, manifesting great interest in the welfare of the institution and giving valuable aid by legal advice and effective advocacy of its cause. The College has shown her appreciation of his char-

acter and attainments by conferring upon him her highest degree of Doctor of Laws.

Mr. Alexander was a man of spotless life and irreproachable character, of sympathetic heart and liberal hand, of integrity above suspicion, and friendship unalloyed by selfishness. He fulfilled all the duties of life, to his family, to his friends, and to his country with scrupulous fidelity. All his actions were prompted and controlled by a deep sense of religious responsibility. He was a consistent member of the Episcopal Church, an intelligent upholder of the tenets of her faith, and a liberal supporter of her temporal interests. As vestryman, and as a frequent delegate to her Diocesan and General Councils, he brought to her deliberations the stores of a well-furnished mind and an enlightened intellect.

Thus living a life of labor and duty, of habitual integrity, purity and religious conviction, he was ready for the summons, however sudden it might be. It is said that in his last visit here, under the apparent consciousness of failing health, he remarked to a friend: "I have lately had unmistakable warnings that I must set my house in order." Of one so methodical in temporal things, and so conscientious in all things, we may have a reasonable assurance that he was not less careful in *Eternal* things, that his "spiritual house" was so habitually "set in order," as to entitle him, in humble faith, to realize the declaration of the Apostle that when the "earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, he had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."

It only remains to present an estimate of Mr. Alexander's character as a Lawyer. For the following just and appreciative sketch I am indebted to the member of the Bar to whom I alluded at the beginning, and which, with some omissions and unimportant alterations, I give substantially in his own words.

For thirty years before his death he had a wide-spread reputation as an able and accomplished lawyer. Though regarded as the leading Chancery lawyer of the State,

and second to none elsewhere, he manifested the highest attainments and skill in other branches of his profession. Whatever the subject with which he had to deal he showed the same grasp of principle, the same mastery of details, the same simplicity of deduction, which mark the great lawyer. His mind was so powerful and acute that he never mistook nor lost sight of the point of the case, nor failed to present it in its true and most attractive light. His ingenuity and readiness of resource were proverbial. His memory was minute and retentive, and his learning was so well digested that no question, however suddenly sprung upon him, found him unprepared. The Reports of the State show the variety of the cases argued by him, and whether the subject were a question of account, for the discussion of which his mathematical turn of mind and habit of thought especially fitted him, or involved the most complicated intricacies of real estate law, every where we see the ready hand of a master.

He was not less distinguished as an advocate. He was remarkably fluent, never hesitating for a word, yet his speeches might all be taken down as he delivered them without change and found just as logical, as well connected, and expressed in as pure English, as if he had spent many hours in their composition.

An eminent French Lawyer has said—"I do not desire for "an *advocate* all the perfections which Cicero and others "require for their *Orator;* for I do not consider high eloquence "to be a principal qualification for an advocate. It is, indeed, "*one* of them and very useful in great pleadings; but it is "not what is most required for the bar. What I desire in "my advocate is that he should learn to conduct well any "suit in which he may be engaged, to prepare the written "pleadings in proper form, and, when he comes to plead, that "he should handle judiciously all the circumstances of the "cause, seize well the point upon which it hinges, and ex- "press himself in well-chosen language, plain and senten- "tious rather than redundant and copious, supporting his

"argument with pertinent reasons and formal and precise "authorities, texts of law, ordinances, customs, and deter- "minations of jurists, without obscuring the subject with "superfluous matter, sometimes embellishing it with a touch "of sentiment, or a passing illustration from the Greek or "Latin, but so significant and to the point that it could not "be better expressed in the vernacular. In short, I desire "for my advocate *the contrary* of what Cicero requires in his "*orator*, (which is *eloquence* in the first place and then some "knowledge of law); for I declare, on the contrary, that an "advocate should *above all* be learned in law and practice "and *moderately* eloquent, more a dialectician than a rhe- "torician, and more a man of business and judgment than "of great or long discourse."

Any one who knew Mr. Alexander might almost imagine that he furnished the example from which these reflections were drawn. If such be a correct representation of the qualifications of an advocate, where will you find a more consummate advocate than he was? He always commanded the fixed attention of his audience, who were deeply impressed by his strong, logical arguments and his earnest style of speaking. His manner and appearance were much in his favor, and none could mistake his shrewd, alert and intelligent countenance and look.

In person Mr. Alexander was spare and apparently frail, yet from the labors he habitually underwent and was capable of to the last, he must have had, as all really great lawyers must have, an iron constitution. In early life his health had become somewhat impaired, but his temperate and frugal habits had restored it. No demand of hard and continuous work was ever made upon him, and such demands were constantly made, to which he was not adequate.

Although he had an astonishing power of getting through work, he was always at work; and yet after fifty years of wear and tear his capacity for toil seemed undiminished,—and, to use a popular expression, "his head was just as level" as it had ever been. One short week before his death

he was in Baltimore on business connected with an important suit in which he was engaged, and in the opinion of all who then saw him, his eye seemed not in the least dimmed, nor his natural force abated. But a cold which he contracted developed into an attack of typhoid pneumonia of so malignant a type as in a few days to exhaust the machine which, to all human appearance, seemed as if it had still twenty years to run.

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Advertiser Print, Annapolis.

# NOTICE
OF
# JAMES EDGAR RICHARDSON, A. M.

It is seldom that we record the history of one of our older Alumni, gathered to his rest full of years and honors and ripe for the harvest, that we are not also called upon to chronicle the death of another member of our association at the outset of his career, buoyant with strength and hope, and with bright anticipations of the future. And thus is it now.

A little over two months after the death of Mr. Alexander, the earthly life of James Edgar Richardson was brought to a close. While on a visit to his old home in this county he was attacked with double pneumonia, and died on the 16th of February, 1872.

He was born July 10th, 1842, and after acquiring the rudiments of an English Education in the Primary Schools of the county, entered the Grammar School of Saint John's College in 1853 at the age of eleven years. Passing through the regular grades of the preparatory department and the collegiate course, he graduated in August, 1859, at the early age of seventeen, taking the second honor of his class and delivering the Salutatory oration.

He received the degree of Master of Arts at the Commencement of 1869, upon which occasion he read an original poem. Shortly after graduating he began the study of the Law at Annapolis, under the direction of the Hon. Wm. H. Tuck. And subsequently, while pursuing his studies at home, he was elected Principal of Brooklyn Academy, Anne Arundel county, which position he held for about eighteen months. After this he continued his law studies at home for several years longer, contributing, in the meantime, quite frequently to various periodicals and newspapers. He was admitted

to the Bar in the year 1869. After practising in this County, and to some extent in Annapolis, he removed to Baltimore in 1870, where he continued to reside up to the time of his death.

Mr. Richardson was a man of considerable versatility of talent, of cultivated literary tastes, a ready writer and speaker, and a poet of no mean pretensions. At College he stood high in his class, and pursued his studies afterwards with great assiduity.

From the number of years that he spent in the study of the law before his admission to the bar, it may be reasonably inferred that he had attained unusual proficiency in its leading principles, and that, had his life been spared, he would have won an enviable reputation in his profession.

He was a man of very amiable and genial disposition, and his manners and conversation never failed to attract to him a favorable regard. He seemed to have cherished an enthusiastic attachment for his *Alma Mater*, and we can vividly recall the zest with which he entered into the spirit of our annual festivals, and the earnestness with which he advocated what he supposed would promote the interests of the College. Had he lived he would doubtless have been with us to-day; and we miss his clear and ringing voice, his pleasant smile and cordial greeting. In the contemplation of his untimely death, we cannot but deeply lament the early blight of what seemed to be the bud of so much hope and so much promise.

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